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CITIES of REFUGE
applied to CHRIST.

From HEB. VI. 18. 19.

IN A

LETTER to a RELIGIOUS SOCIETY.

*Amidst Temptations sharp and strong,
My Soul to this dear Refuge flies;
Hope is my Anchor, firm and strong,
While Tempests blow, and Billows rise,*

WATTS.

THE FOURTH EDITION.

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By H. PHILIPS, in SARUM.

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T H E

CITIES of REFUGE applied to CHRIST.

My dear Brethren & Sisters in the Lord Jesus,

* * * * * A S T LORD'S - DAY I expe-
 * * * * * perience some sweetness and
 * * * * * L * * * enlargement in speaking from
 * * * * * these words, Heb. vi. 18, 19, 20.
 * * * * * Who have fled for refuge to lay
 hold upon the hope set before us;
 which hope we have as an anchor of the soul,
 both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into
 that within the vail, &c.-----Here I used my
 endeavours to demonstrate, that Christ is the
 alone refuge for all penitent sinners; namely,
 all that are awakened to their imminent dan-
 ger, and who are enlightened to see their lost
 and undone state, as well through actual as
 original sin.

CHRIST

CHRIST our refuge is referred to the cities of refuge under the law, which we read of in Joshua, chapter xx. three were on this side Jordan, and three on the other side. These were appointed an *asylum* by GOD for the manslayer, that he might flee into one of them from the avenger of blood. The manslayer, I humbly apprehend to be an emblem of sinners in general; the avenger of blood may justly represent law, justice, and whatsoever is formidable to our souls. The manslayer, to hasten his flight, must beforehand be thoroughly convinced that there is a place of safety, a city of refuge; he must also be sensible of his crime and guilt, or else he would never make an attempt to escape thither for protection and safety. As he runs, he is oppressed with fears, which are attended with a bodily languor, lest the avenger of blood in pursuit should be close at his heels, and consequently seize upon him as his lawful captive before he could get into the city of refuge, and lay hold upon the hope set before him. There was inscribed in large characters upon the gates of the city, *Refuge, Refuge!* and all obstacles in the roads, or avenues leading thereto, were removed out of the way, and the cities were situated either upon high eminences or mountains, that they might be discerned at a distance, and become conspicuous to all men.

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Now, my dear friends, what do you think of the above account? I am apt to imagine that you have made the application already, and that it is needless for me to make any further enlargement; but then, as divine truths are not like old ballads, or unprofitable fables, consequently the more we speak, and the longer we dwell upon them, the more sweet and palatable they will savour to our tastes. There is something alluring and engaging in the ways of GOD, to a child of GOD; he is renewed, and participates of a more intimate communion with his Maker; he is made more lively and experienced by the exercise of his graces, and the addition of fresh supplies from the inexhaustible fountain of living waters. I mention not these particulars by way of information or instruction, but purely with an intention that you may take a retrospective view of the dangers you have escaped, and recal to your memories the invaluable blessings you have received through the wounds of your Redeemer. You all have fled for refuge to JESUS CHRIST; you saw the brandishing of the sword of justice over your heads, which was ready to pierce your entrails, and drive you before its point to eternal ruin and perdition. You saw that you were under the curse of the law, having transgressed against the purity thereof in thought, word, and deed. You were compelled to
cry

try out Guilty, Guilty. You werethen directed by the unerring SPIRIT of the living GOD to the city of refuge; you fled to the blessed JESUS to be saved from the wrath to come; you had recourse to him as your only refuge; and when you came to him, far from being disappointed in your expectations, you met an assemblage in him of all that is truly great and omnipotent, as grace, truth, mercy, and salvation; and then *free grace* was the sweet subject of your song. Refuge, Refuge! this is a powerful cry to the avenger of blood! It is all one as if it said, Stop! Stop! See! See! Refuge! Refuge here! Touch him not. Let law, justice, wrath, and curse, take to them wings and flee away; he is beyond their empire;---*the Son hath made him free, he shall be free indeed!*

The sinner then upon cool reflection, and from the ecstacy of a grateful heart, cries out, I am saved! I am saved! I narrowly escaped with my life from the fire and brimstone that was showered down upon Sodom. *My lot has fallen unto me in a pleasant place.* While I sojourn in this vale of misery, I will exult and triumph in free grace. I am an example of the power and efficacy of my Saviour's blood and attonement. Let the avenger of blood pursue some other path, he has no power to injure a vessel of mercy.

The three cities on this side Jordan are as follow, viz. *Kedesh, Shechem, and Hebron:*

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They were upon three different mountains, at equal distances, to picture unto us the plainness of the Gospel, and the condescending love of CHRIST to poor, penitent, heavy-laden sinners, that all may experimentally know and see, and spiritually feel the truth, as it is in JESUS. *Kedesh* was upon mount *Nephtali*. *Kedesh* signifies *holiness*, and the mount upon which it stands signifies *wrestling*; so that CHRIST is made unto us holiness as well as righteousness; consequently they who are savingly brought to CHRIST by faith, have their hearts purified, their inward man changed and renewed; they are brought from under the power of sin and the condemnatory power of the law; they are made more than conquerors, and become victorious upon the mount of *wrestling*. The people of GOD are *wrestlers*; they plead with their GOD for his blessings, namely, for his illuminating grace and direction, for the assistance of his SPIRIT, and for his cheering presence and love shed abroad in their hearts. They take the kingdom of GOD with violence; they wrestle against principalities and powers, against the world, the flesh, and the Devil: they are an *holy generation*, a *royal priesthood*, an *holy nation*, a peculiar people.

The next city is *Shechem*; this city is upon mount *Ephraim*. *Shechem* signifies *portion*; and *Ephraim*, *fruitful*. The LORD JESUS

is the portion of all his people; he is their inheritance and invaluable portion in so eminent a degree, that they entirely cast their cares upon him, as knowing that he is infinitely sufficient to answer all their necessities, and supply all their wants, be they ever so many, perplexing, or vexatious. A due consideration of the blessings that flow from our IMMANUEL, is a motive mighty thro' GOD to make a rebellious people sincerely zealous and fruitful in works of faith, and to the *pulling down of strong-holds, and to the bringing all thoughts to the obedience of CHRIST.* O that in these days many more were truly fixed upon mount *Ephraim!*

The next city is *Hebron*, upon mount *Juda*. *Hebron* signifies *fellowship*; and *Juda*, *praise*. Those that are in CHRIST, have fellowship with the FATHER and the SON, and that by the operations of the SPIRIT, in the exercise of his ordinances, and other means, in which he bestows his grace upon them. These have fellowship, not with the unfruitful works of darkness, but with the saints, who are called out of darkness into his marvellous light. Fellowship cannot subsist without love and union, for union is the cause and the original of our souls communion with our GOD and each other. This is being upon the mount indeed; consequently they who are happily situated upon mount *Juda*, cannot but praise and exalt him for
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such unmerited favours received; and the purport of their song is, *Blessed be the Lamb, for he hath redeemed us unto himself.* Whoever is in CHRIST, is a partaker of these blessings. I must own there are many evils that daily occur to pull us down from mount *Juda*; but none greater than our corrupt nature and unbelief. Now the unclean leper, who is truly sensible of these calamities, will, without loss of time, flee to CHRIST for holiness, fruitfulness, fellowship, and praise; for the spirit of praise, for refuge and safety; and he that thus cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out. I remember a story that is related of one of the heathen philosophers: As he was walking out, he took particular notice of a little bird that was closely pursued by a hawk; and when he was almost in the talons of his enemy, he fled for safety into the bosom of the philosopher. Ah! said he, and didst thou flee unto me for refuge? I will not hurt thee; thou shalt receive thy usual liberty. Just so it is with poor souls, who are tenderly embraced in the arms of their Redeemer, upon their coming unto him weary and heavy-laden. The tenderness of CHRIST's heart, his pity and compassion to those who are truly of broken and contrite hearts, and who lie humbled in the dust at his feet, is indeed wonderful and amazing.--- *This man receiveth sinners,* saith the Pharisee. True, he does so; and blessed be his holy name

name for the same: *Publicans and harlots will enter into his kingdom before a Pharisee.*--- Send a wretched *Samaritan* sinner to him: the Pharisees will use their utmost rhetoric to convict and stone such a delinquent, but the blessed JESUS will reply, *He that is without sin amongst you, let him first cast a stone at her*; but they, convicted in their own consciences, will shamefully retire one by one, and then, out of his unbounded mercy, he will say to the guilty criminal, *I condemn thee not; go and sin no more.* There is no condemnation to them that are in CHRIST JESUS; their husband is their Maker, their surety, and their friend.

There are many more truths couched in the words of the text. The soul is compared to a ship, and hope to an anchor. The soul is the ship; grace is the ballast; the helm is the will; the sails are heavenly affections, faith and love; the pilot is CHRIST; the sea is this world, where we are exposed to a multiplicity of dangers; the rocks and quicksands are errors in judgment, and self-righteousness; the pirates or sea-robbers are the temptations of the devil, which are continually assaulting us as with fiery darts, and warring against the soul. The world is tempestuously assailed with snares and innumerable evils, such as persecution, crosses, afflictions, unbelief, hardness of heart, &c. pride, with many others; but blessed be God, CHRIST is our pilot, most wise, most skilful,
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most *tremendous*, and most *powerful*! The blackest clouds, and the thickest darkness, cannot obscure us from his sight! Darkness and light are both alike unto him. He will be our guide unto death; and the blessed gale that wafts us on our voyage, is the sweet influence of his Pure and Holy SPIRIT. The port we are bound to, is the harbour of the heavenly Jerusalem; and our hope, like an anchor, is steadily fixed upon the beach, that is bordering upon the haven of everlasting joy and repose, *and immediately enters into that within the vail*, see Lev. xvi. 15. The blood of the sin-offering was to be sprinkled within the vail of the temple, which separated between the holy of holies and the body of the temple. The blood was to be sprinkled both upon the mercy-seat and before the mercy-seat. Analogous hereto, our faith applies, and our hope lays hold upon the blood and merits of our Saviour, who is entered into heaven in our nature and our name, and there causes the throne to be a throne of mercy, being surrounded with his blood. If poor sinners stand in a suppliant posture before the throne, there is acceptance, there is peace, love and mercy seated there for their support; and this hope, like an anchor, is stayed upon CHRIST, as upon a rock, which will preserve us steadfast and unshaken, let the hurricane be ever so violent or tempestuous. In the world we may be tossed, stricken, and wounded,

wounded, but never destroyed, *for we are kept through faith by the power of GOD unto eternal salvation.* This hope purifies the heart; it is a lively hope, a good hope through grace, the natural effect of a renewed and of a regenerate state: all its expectations are built upon sure foundations, which are GOD's unchangeable love, truth, faithfulness, oaths, promises, and atonement, Heb. vi. 17. You may see from hence the vast difference there is between the hope of the hypocrite and the sincere Christian: the hope of the former is built upon the sand, but the hope of the latter upon the Rock of ages. The one is unrenewed, and solely depends upon a self-righteousness, a merciful GOD, and a *future* amendment of life; but the other stakes his All upon a reconciled GOD in CHRIST, independent of the works of the law.

I should rejoice if I could afford you any help or assistance in this way, and I would the rather exert myself at this season, upon this account, that a deadness of late has invaded the churches in general. And may the LORD revive his work! My Christian love to you all. Pray for me, that I may be made useful in CHRIST's vineyard, who am, dear friends, your poor unworthy brother in CHRIST, our common Redeemer,

Salisbury.

H. PHILIPS.

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